United Nations A/54/376

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 September 1999

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 88
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 53/49 of 3 December 1998.

2. The report includes the substance of responses from Member States and United Nations agencies to the appeal contained in that resolution, together with reference to further action taken by Member States and United Nations agencies in response to the appeal contained in General Assembly resolutions 32/90 F of 13 December 1977, 33/112 C of 18 December 1978, 34/52 C of 23 November 1979, 35/13 B of 3 November 1980, 36/146 H of 16 December 1981, 37/120 D of 16 December 1982, 38/83 D of 15 December 1983, 39/99 D of 14 December 1984, 40/165 D of 16 December 1985, 41/69 D of 3 December 1986, 42/69 D of 2 December 1987, 43/57 D of 6 December 1988, 44/47 D of 8 December 1989, 45/73 D of 11 December 1990, 46/46 D of 9 December 1991, 47/69 D of 14 December 1992, 48/40 D of 10 December 1993, 49/35 D of 9 December 1994, 50/28 D of 6 December 1995, 51/127 of 13 December 1996 and 52/60 of 10 December 1997. By these resolutions, the Assembly appealed to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to augment special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees; invited the relevant specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue, within their respective spheres of competence, to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students; and requested the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to act as the recipient and trustee for such special allocations for grants and scholarships and to award them to qualified refugee candidates.

3. In the 1999 fiscal year, the Government of Japan awarded nine fellowships through UNRWA, of which five were to Palestine refugees who were employed by UNRWA as vocational training staff at the eight vocational training centres in the UNRWA area of operations, one fellowship was in vocational training administration, and the other three fellowships were in community health. Applications for nominees for these fellowships for training in Japan were being processed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. A review of this programme from its inception in 1985 until 1999 showed that a total of 163 fellowships had been offered by the Government of Japan, of which 154 had been processed. In 1989, the Government of Japan contributed $1 million, to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The recipients are Palestine

99-27159 (E) 111099

refugee students from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Of these students, 144 graduated from this programme in a wide spectrum of specializations between 1993 and 1998, while 18 students were still pursuing their studies in the 1998/1999 academic year. The Government of Japan contributed an additional $400,000 in each of the years 1992, 1993 and 1994, $500,000 in 1995, and $600,000 in each of the years 1996 and 1997, to be spent over a five-year period towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates from UNRWA's area of operations. The recipients are Palestine refugee students. A total of 437 recipients participated in the programme in the 1998/1999 scholastic year, while 122 graduated between 1995 and 1998. In 1998, the Government of Japan contributed $71,000 to the university scholarship programme. This contribution was used in 1998/1999 to cover the awards to 111 continuing scholars, out of 154 hitherto funded by the UNRWA General Fund budget, funding for which had been frozen due to the financial problems facing UNRWA. Funding of the awards for the remaining 43 scholars was covered from savings from previous Japanese contributions realized due to the early graduation of some scholars and the failure of others. These awards, while not specifically in response to the General Assembly resolution, are in keeping with their spirit.

4. The Government of Switzerland contributed $1,703,581 between 1989 and 1996 and an additional $338,000 in 1997 to the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The number of students from the UNRWA area of operations who were still pursuing their university studies in the 1998/1999 academic year was 170, including 19 scholars who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution. Between 1993 and 1998, 188 scholars graduated and three failed. Out of the 315 scholars who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution for one year only, 67 scholars graduated in 1998, seven failed and 87 were granted scholarships in 1998/1999 from savings of previous Swiss contributions.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as part of its long-standing agreement with UNRWA and within the framework of its regular programme of scholarships for Palestinians, granted 13 scholarships in favour of Palestinian students during the 1998/1999 biennium.

6. Since 1994, all fellowship applications to the World Health Organization (WHO) have been nominated by the Palestinian Authority. In 1998/1999, WHO provided a total of 62 fellowships/study tours for qualified Palestinian candidates in various specializations with a commutative total of 90 months' study.

7. The United World Colleges (UWC) have now established their own selection committee in the area and did not offer any scholarships through UNRWA for the 1997/1998 school year. One scholarship was offered for 1998/1999 by Lester B. Pearson UWC of the Pacific, of Canada, and was processed, and another scholarship was offered for 1999/2000 and is being processed.